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## CAN MAN ABOLISH WAR?—II

BY HAROLD BEGBIE

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Two ways are chiefly recommended to mankind whereby the peace of the world may be secured. One of these ways is styled arbitration; the other, international federation. Before proceeding to examine what these terms mean, let me repeat the suggestion I ventured to make in my previous article, namely, that almost any machinery of this order would suffice for the security of peace provided the nations brought to it in all their controversies the moral quality of good will. My argument is that without this spirit of good will no machinery of any kind can be rationally regarded as a sufficient insurance against war.

In the year 1907 the nations of Europe, gathered together at the second Hague Conference, solemnly avowed their "firm determination to co-operate in the maintenance of general peace," and "to favor with all their efforts the amicable settlement of international conflicts." Seven years afterwards, as Europe knows to her cost, such a war broke upon the world as never was known in the history of mankind—a war not only involving nearly the whole household of humanity, but conducted with a scientific barbarism, an extremity of unscrupulousness, an abandonment of all chivalry and moral considerations, such as savages have never practiced. Not only was the solemn compact broken—the compact to arbitrate disputes, but, what is even more to the point, one after another of those pledges which had been made to mitigate the cruelties of war were thrown to the wind.

In the last days of July, 1914, there was not a peasant toiling in the fields of Bavaria, Austria, Russia, or France who would have said (if he knew of the dispute at all) that the trouble between the Governments of Europe called for

an immediate decision. He would have said that a year hence would scarcely make any difference to that dispute. He would have gladly gone on with his harvest work, and left it to the judges of the Hague Tribunal to decide (when they liked) how the matter should be settled. And, furthermore, could he have known how this event was destined to go, he would have lifted up his voice and protested angrily against the panic haste of the Governments.

But to autocratic rulers, suspicious statesmen, and responsible soldiers this matter had an urgency which could be counted by seconds. The telegraph was scarce quick enough for them. The atomless ether could hardly satisfy their impatience. Their diplomacy was now only a burglar's mask. Everything turned upon preparedness for war. Who would be ready first? Who would get the advantage of the first blow? All turned on this. And before a bench of judges could be summoned armies were mobilized, peasants streamed from their homes to the barracks, and war was as certain as death.

This is the supreme point of arbitration. So long as diplomacy is secret, and so long as there are autocratic rulers deciding the fates of people over their heads, so long will panic destroy the great essential of arbitration—*time*. If the Reichstag in Berlin had been in July, 1914, a body of men like the British House of Commons, and if before Prussia declared war a responsible Minister had been obliged to get the consent of the people's representatives, then it is clear as noonday that this war could not have come with that terrible suddenness which threw the common sense of Europe off its balance. Whether the dispute between Austria and Serbia could have been settled by the Hague Tribunal is another matter; but this, at least, is certain, that but for the autocratic character of German institutions war could not have come to Europe before the subject of dispute had been publicly debated at the Hague Tribunal.

We see, then, that arbitration is no security against war, and that to make it even a tolerable insurance against this fearful calamity certain conditions are essential. Diplomacy must not be secret; the issues of peace and war must not lie in the hands of autocracy; the peoples of each State must discuss in advance every question of dispute and themselves decide in what manner it shall be settled. These

conditions are essential, not because democracies are wiser or less ambitious than autocracies, not because frank and public diplomacy is less provocative than secret diplomacy, but because *time* is the great prophylactic against panic. Just as the angry and indignant man who sleeps on a furious letter to the neighbor who has annoyed him seldom sends that letter when morning comes, so nations seldom court the very uncertain and always destructive arbitrament of war when they have had time to reflect upon the consequences of refusing arbitration.

Canon Grove, in his admirable book, *The Passing of War*, rightly defends the success of the principle of arbitration from its various critics, militaristic and otherwise. He can truthfully say that when national representatives at the Hague specifically agree that arbitration is "the most efficacious and at the same time most equitable method" of settling disagreements of a legal character insoluble by diplomacy, this is no mere beating the air, but "the statement of a plain fact of proved practical utility." He quotes figures of a very impressive kind to justify his optimism:

As all the world knows, an opportunity was created in 1899 for focusing the efforts of all States "sincerely seeking to make the great idea of universal peace triumph over the elements of trouble and discord." But while at this first Hague Conference only twenty-six Powers were represented, at the second, in 1907, the represented Powers were forty-four, including practically the civilized world. The working of the law of acceleration in this leap in the numbers of represented States, from twenty-six to forty-four in eight years, is similarly prominent in the rapidly growing acceptance of the arbitration principle as a mode of settling national disputes. Dividing the eighty years from 1820 to 1900 into four periods of twenty years each, the number of cases submitted and decided stands as follows: Eight only in the first period of twenty years, thirty in the second, forty-four in the third, and in the last period ninety; or if the twenty years are counted back from 1903 the adjudications number 115. The ratio of increase is as significant as the growth itself.

These figures, as I have said, are impressive, and the war of 1914 does not invalidate them; they stand as unanswerable witnesses to the efficacy of a great principle. But, clearly enough, the war of 1914 proves that arbitration by itself is no security for the peace of the world.

Arbitration may have safeguarded that precious peace again and again, but as it stood in 1914 it was powerless to stay the march of war.

President Wilson has made a suggestion which carries this matter a step forward—a step in the direction of compulsory arbitration. His proposal for a league of nations, foreshadowed, perhaps, by that strange mystic, the Czar Alexander I in the Holy Alliance of a hundred years ago, means that a recalcitrant State should be forced by the military power of other States to seek the decision of an international court in all its disputes. That is to say, that war in future is to be prevented by war. It means, and it can mean nothing else, that Europe is still to be an armed camp, that peace is to be always in jeopardy, and that the same mind which produced this war is to exist in perpetuity; the only difference is the presence in the world of a police force which at least begins its work with good intentions.

The objections which can be raised against this suggestion are many and great; but do not let us miss the very important consideration that this suggestion, in spite of all the objections against it, is one which could give us what we are seeking, provided the good will of the nations were guaranteed. It is just because this guarantee is lacking, and must be lacking for some years, that the President's proposal is not merely inefficacious, but in the present condition of Europe positively dangerous. For is it not obvious that unless this league of nations were formed out of a perfectly satisfied world its existence would be a veritable seed-plot for conspiracy, a veritable hot-bed for war? Its police force, for instance, would be composed not of respectable citizens, nor of repentant thieves, but of unconverted burglars and of incorrigible murderers. There would be whisperings at street corners when the peaceful world lay asleep, and no man could be certain that he would not wake to find a burglar-policeman in his room. For as things stand at present how could the nations prevent secret groupings of this police force, and how could there be anything else but these secret groupings in a world utterly dissatisfied by its present division?

We are too much inclined, we English and Americans in particular, to think that all other nations should be satisfied with things as they are. We cannot imagine why other

nations should be restless and provocative. The *status quo* is so eminently satisfactory to us that we regard as criminals those who would disturb it. Our English newspapers, if I may presume to say so, have been almost laughable of late in their assumption of virtue, and almost grotesque in their imputations of wickedness to other countries. Let us consider, for example, the quite extraordinary outburst of Pharisaism which greeted the publication of the Allies' terms of peace. Well might the unreflecting citizen have felt his bosom swell with pride as he read every day of Britain's glorious disinterestedness in this war and of her determination, at whatever sacrifice in blood and treasure, to vindicate the rights of small nations. But if he had remembered a remarkable leading article which appeared so long ago as Christmas Day, 1911, in *The Times* newspaper, he might have lost his vain-glory in a mood of more helpful Christian humility. That article said:

We may surely ask ourselves whether a quickened sense of human fellowship and of the Christian brotherhood of man might not have abated the conflicts and assuaged the antagonisms which have so nearly wrecked our peace at home and abroad. It is an elementary part of our duty to our neighbors to seek peace and pursue it, to do unto others as we would they should do unto us. Have we always remembered this golden rule in our dealings with our neighbors, national and international? It may be that we have, or think we have, but it is worth while to reflect that of the two men who went up to the Temple to pray it was not the man who said, "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are," but the man of humble soul, who said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner," who went down to his house justified rather than the other.

Our view of ourselves is one thing; what the rest of the world thinks of us is quite another. Let us endeavor to see ourselves, in the matter of these peace terms, as others see us. We shall then perhaps be better able to understand why those righteous peace terms are resented, and resented with a particular bitterness towards our own country, a bitterness which does not scruple to charge us with the deadly sin of Pharisaism.

A Radical German newspaper thus speaks of those terms:

England . . . doubled her empire between 1780 and 1870, since which year she has acquired the following new possessions: In

Asia, the island of Cyprus, a part of Borneo, Burmah, Beloochistan, and the Malay Protectorate; in Africa, Nigeria, British East Africa, Uganda, Somaliland, Bechuanaland, Rhodesia, British Kaffraria, Natal, Transvaal, and the Orange Free State, Egypt, and the Sudan; and in Australia, the Fiji Islands. . . . England has thus increased her territory 60 per cent. during the last fifty years.

### And a National-Liberal newspaper :

They pretend to fight for the principle of free nationalities and protection of the small peoples. Rightly does the German note point to the fact that this principle has a strange appearance in the mouth of these world-vampires, who have stolen whole continents and who even now violate every small State that does not submit to their own interests.

### And Herr Dernburg's comment is :

Imagine applying the principle of nationality to *America*! Is their country to be split up into separate States—German and English, Scandinavian and Italian, with a great independent negro republic dominating the South? Those who know Europe have only to bring forward a string of names to make patent the glaring contradiction: Finland and the Baltic, Little Russia and the Caucasus, Turkestan and Persia, Ireland, India, the Boer Republics, Gibraltar, Malta, Corsica, Savoy, Nice, Corea, and Manchuria. After that what is left of the French demand for Alsace-Lorraine, which, as a matter of fact, was originally torn from the German Empire in the most brutal way? If the principle is applied to America, the Louisiana [sic] and the Mississippi [sic] ought to be given back to the French, California and Arizona to the Spaniards, and New York to the Dutch.

Many more comments, arguing in the same direction and breathing the same spirit, might be produced every week from the instructive pages of *The Cambridge Magazine*; nor would all those comments come from enemy countries. And even if we are disposed to dismiss these comments as fantastic, even if we over-emphasize the palpable absurdity of them and miss the central truth contained in the wildest of them, still we cannot deny that they witness to a condition of the German mind eminently and decisively dissatisfied with the *status quo*.

We are face to face, then, with this supreme difficulty. Unless the league of nations is prepared to hold down by force, for an indefinite period, Germany, Austria, Turkey,

and Bulgaria, the peace of the world would always be at the mercy of these dissatisfied countries. I can perfectly understand the point of view of an English militarist who argues that there is not room in the world for two great empires, and that Germany must have that idea knocked out of her head once and for all. This is a sane and logical point of view. There is no doubt that if the philosophy of Nietzsche is true, and if morals in politics are an affectation, we should exert all our power, now that we have got the world on our side, to dismember the German Empire, to enfeeble her people, and to bar her progress at every point of the compass. But this is a point of view which presupposes the eternity of the sword. It cannot possibly present itself to those who hate war as Kant hated it, and Goethe, and Fichte, and Hegel. It cannot for a moment be entertained by any man who believes in the religious progress of humanity. It is a notion, whatever else may be its implications, which makes a scrap of paper of the Gospel of Christ.

But how can we expect Germany and Austria and Turkey and Bulgaria to enter our league of nations if their entrance is to be made in the rags of beggary with the mark of slaves upon their brows? We can force them in such a condition to enter, but with what hope of their co-operation in the great work of world civilization? Surely we must confess that a league of nations so composed would break asunder within measurable time. The conspiracies of the malcontents might fail; their mutinies might be beaten by the police force of the other nations; their revolts might be feeble and short-lived; but such revolts would do something more than disturb the armed peace of the world—they would introduce dangerous controversies into the league.

It seems evident, I think, that if this league of nations is to be formed, and if from this league which, clearly, is only a beginning, the nations are, in the words of the late Lord Salisbury, to be "welded in some international constitution," which he foresaw to be the one eventual security against war, it is, above all other things, necessary that good will should inspire the whole body of nations forming that league.

International federation, which we are now considering, is manifestly the greatest political ideal which presents itself to good men in every country under the sun. If there could be in the world an international court of justice, to



which every dispute between the federated nations would automatically be referred, and if behind this international court of justice there could be a force of the federated nations to see that its judgments were honored, then surely we might hope with Lord Salisbury for "a long spell of unfettered and prosperous trade and continued peace."

But as soon as we begin to particularize, the obstacles to such an international constitution appear almost insurmountable. For example, let us suppose that France claimed from us the restitution of the Channel Islands and the court decided that we should surrender them. In this case, despite all the difficulties, we might bow with a good grace to the judgment of the court. But suppose that India appealed to the court for self-government, and was followed by Egypt, and then that Spain came into court against us, claiming Gibraltar and Malta, would it be easy for us to submit? No one dreams of setting up an international constitution which would merely preserve the *status quo*; it is obvious that this international constitution must be as adaptable and progressive as a national constitution; that it must be, indeed, the supreme judge of every decade of world politics. Are we, then, quite certain that we could with safety commit our national destinies into the hands of such a constitution? *Might not the peace of the world be too high a price to pay for loss of control over our own British destiny?*

The Englishman, of all nationalities, is the freest, and has the notion of freedom in his very blood. The French historian, M. Seignobus, has paid us this compliment: "The English people developed the political mechanism of modern Europe, constitutional monarchy, parliamentary government, and safeguards for personal liberty. The other nations have only imitated them." And Professor Ramsay Muir, in *Nationalism and Internationalism*, shows that England, where equal law was established by the Norman and Angevin kings, was "the first of European nations to achieve full consciousness of her nationhood." England, then, is of all countries the least unlikely to resent the decisions of law. She has none of the irritable pride of the parvenu; she is old in her hatred of militarism; she is patient, peace-loving, law-abiding. But who can think of this England allowing an international court of justice to decide for her whether India should be left to a bloody con-

test between Mussulmans and Hindus, and whether her stupendous work in Egypt should be exposed to the destruction of desert tribes? And if England would not easily submit to such jurisdiction, how can we expect submission from those more arrogant nations in whose blood is the pride of the sword and in whose history is no long tradition of the law?

If we are honest with ourselves, must we not acknowledge that there is some indestructible force in nationalism which insists upon making its own way across the centuries, and which cannot trust itself to the interference of others? Is it not a truth of every educated Englishman's existence that, like Milton, "content with these British islands as my world," he feels the destiny of his country to be something immeasurably greater and infinitely more precious than anything else in the politics of the world? And is it to be expected of other nations that they should submit to a foreign decision matters which they feel to be vital to *their* destinies—as great and as precious to them as the destiny of England is to the Englishman? Small matters, such as disputes touching the interpretation of international law, we can imagine any nation submitting to a tribunal of the peoples; but not matters which concern their destiny.

And yet it is through this very pressure of nationalism that the world is most likely to reach the ideal goal of international federation. Instead of finding, as so many pacifists have argued, that nationalism is a bar to internationalism, we shall find, I think, that by no other road is internationalism to be reached. But we shall imperil this great hope if we insist upon proceeding with President Wilson's suggestion for a league of nations with any idea in our minds that a mechanical solution can be found for national rivalries. *Good will* is essential.

Let us beware of pouring the new wine of international fraternity into the old skins of national hatreds. These dreadful hatreds, history teaches us, will pass. But no form of international machinery, even when this present tempest of hatred has passed, can guarantee to the nations of the earth a true and lasting peace until the spirit which animates the relations of states is definitely the spirit of Good Will.

HAROLD BEGBIE.